

SOURCES

This brochure was created using oral history, files and other data from public repositories: Washingtoniana Division - Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, DC Historic Preservation Office, Founders Library at Howard University, DC Archives, DC Recorder of Deeds, National Archives, and the following selected sources:

Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865-1945*, (New York: Routledge, 2004)

Harrison M. Ethridge, "The Black Architects of Washington, D.C., 1900-Present," Ph.D. Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1979

"Historic Permits Database 1877-1949" (2007), compiled by Brian Kraft for DC Historic Preservation Office

"Thematic Study of African American Architects and Builders in Washington, DC" (1994), prepared by Betty Bird for United Planning Organization

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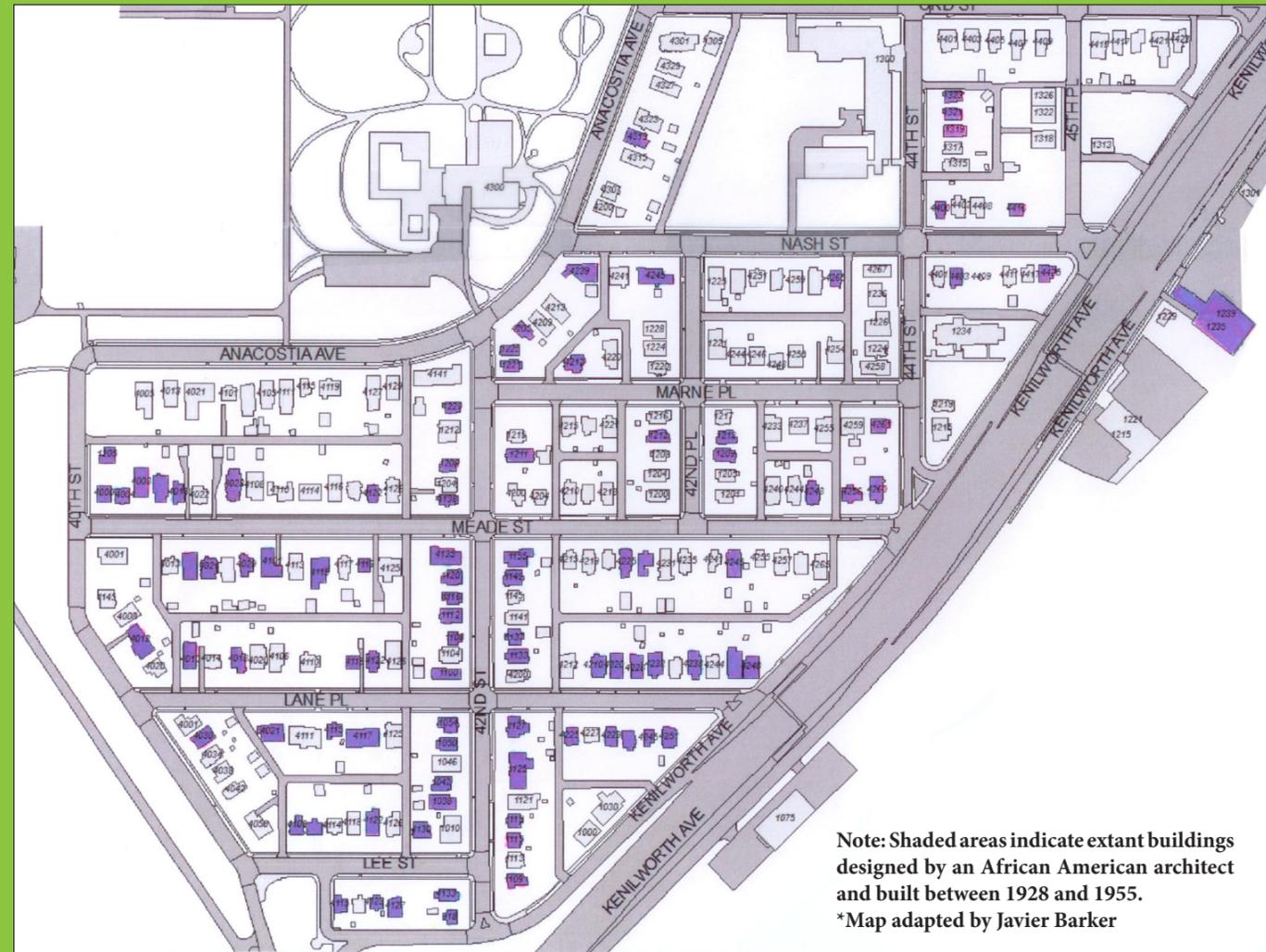
EASTLAND GARDENS FLOWER CLUB HISTORY COMMITTEE

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EARLY RESIDENTS

Beginning in 1929, the earliest families to move in included:

- Clifford "Jesse" & Esther Glover at 4218 Meade Street.
- Walter & Bettie Robertson at 4238 Lane Place.
- Marion Louise Stewart at 4235 Meade Street.
- Residents on Lane Place included: Alvin & Theresa Sewell at 4244; Henry and Lenora Spencer; Henry's son and wife Henry Jr. & Mabel Spencer at 4246; and Samuel & Ella Gibson at 4248.
- By 1931 residents on Meade Street included: Russell & Loraine Chambers at 4210; John Mundell at 4215; James & Mary Catlett at 4223; William Norman at 4233; Gaston & Josephine Briggs at 4235; James & Nora Butler at 4244; William and Harriett Williams at 4257; and Jacob & Olive Handy at 4245.
- In 1932, Beatrice Fuller, her mother, Elsie Coleman Johnson and grandmother, Florence Irene Denund, at 1204 42nd Place.
- In 1934, Mason & Beatrice White moved to 1225 42nd Street.
- In 1939, Alexander & Christine Green moved to 4248 Meade Street and Owen & Rhedine Davis to 1137 42nd Street.

This was the beginning of a new upscale development for middle-class African Americans to own property, raise families, and create a beautiful community of their own.

PROMINENT RESIDENTS

The opportunity to live in a suburban atmosphere in homes designed by black architects and builders attracted many of Washington's black middle class and high achievers. Several Eastland Gardens residents made impacts in the neighborhood and the city, including **Walter Robertson**, who in 1931 became the first president of the Civic Association of Eastland Gardens and led efforts to bring road and safety improvements to the area. **Frank Young** was a professor at Howard University. **Rhuedine Davis**, founder of the Eastland Gardens Flower Club (1956), was instrumental in clean-up and promotion of the use of the Aquatic Gardens, and in the creation of Kenilworth Park. In 1965, she received the Women's Doer of the Year award through Lady Bird Johnson's Beautification Program. Mrs. Davis's husband, Deputy Police Chief **Owen Davis**, became the highest ranking black in the DC Metropolitan Police Department in 1966. **Erman Clay**, Command Sergeant Major (Ret.), as president of the civic association was key in bringing the Kenilworth Parkside Recreation Center to the neighborhood. **Wesley Collins, Sr.** was elected president of the Far Northeast-Southeast Council of Civic Associations. **Harold** and **Louise Chinn**, educators, were active leaders in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. **Christine Green**, **Elaine Hymes**, **Regina Rutledge** and **Betty Vann** were among the first African American teachers at nearby Kenilworth Elementary School. These are just a few of the early outstanding Eastland Gardens residents.

EASTLAND GARDENS



AFRICAN AMERICAN ARCHITECTS & BUILDERS 1928 – 1955

The original Eastland Gardens development in Northeast Washington, DC is bordered by Ord Street, Kenilworth Avenue, Lee Street, 40th Street and Anacostia Avenue, and is situated near the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and Mayfair Mansions. The community, predominantly owner-occupied by African Americans, is known for its well-kept suburban-style houses and beautiful tree-lined streets. However, the biggest community asset is that its homes were designed and built primarily by African American architects and builders.

In 1928, Eastland Gardens, Inc. purchased property near the old Benning Race Track to be subdivided and developed into homes. Developers and lot owners demonstrated a preference for African American architects and builders. The first to buy and move into the community that took the name Eastland Gardens were African Americans. By 1955, 16 black architects and seven black builders had designed and constructed at least 105 of the 166 structures that existed then. A section of the community that included over 20 buildings designed and/or built by African Americans was razed with the construction of I-295. Although this action disconnected a small portion of the neighborhood both in geography and in identity, the larger community has strengthened its civic pride and activism as a result.

ARCHITECTS & BUILDERS OF EASTLAND GARDENS

African American architects were provided a unique opportunity to showcase their designs in Eastland Gardens. While there are many examples around Washington, much of their work is found in communities such as Brookland and Deanwood NE. However, the greatest concentration may have been in Eastland Gardens where 16 black architects designed at least 105 buildings between 1929 and 1955.

In some instances, the homes were projects of Howard University architecture students working under the direction of a master architect. In other instances, a few residents acted as designer and/or builder of their own homes.

The most prolific Eastland Gardens architects were Lewis W. Giles, Sr. with 45 homes, and J. Alonzo Plater with 20. Other architects included: Romulus C. Archer (8); Augustus N. Bull (8); John B. Holloway, Jr. (5); Roscoe I. Vaughn (6); S. Leslie Branson (3); Howard H. Mackey, Sr. (3); Leslie K. Downing (2); Clyde M. Drayton (2); Cyril G. Bow (1); George Alonzo Ferguson (1); and J.L. Turner (1). Styles include Georgian, Colonial and Tudor Revival, Bungalow, Four-Square, and Ranch. African American builders included Randolph Dodd, H.M. Griffin, R.A. Froe, and Oliver B. Cassell.

These artisans and many others continued to contribute to the wonderful community where the last home built in the area, in 2005, was designed and built by African Americans. Selected architects who designed in Eastland Gardens between 1929 and 1955 are featured here.

ROMULUS CORNELIUS ARCHER, JR. (1890-1968)



1120 42nd Street, 1936
Builder: Randolph Dodd



1125 42th Street, 1939
Builder: Randolph Dodd

Archer was born in Norfolk, VA and completed his education in architecture at Columbia University in 1913. In December 1921, he opened a solo practice in Washington and in 1926 became the second licensed black architect in Washington, following John Lankford. Archer's house designs included red-brick, Georgian-styled houses found also in Brookland neighborhood. In addition, he designed apartment buildings, medium-sized commercial structures and churches in DC and Virginia.

S. LESLIE BRANSON

(DATE-OF-BIRTH AND DATE OF DEATH UNKNOWN)



4133 Lee Street, 1947
Builder: J.B. Runsten

Branson, about whom little is known, was a student at Howard University in 1937. As early as 1938, he was listed as an architect on several building permits for residences. He designed many houses in other Northeast Washington communities such as Lincoln Heights and Central Northeast.

GUSTAVUS N. BULL

(DATE-OF-BIRTH AND DATE OF DEATH UNKNOWN)



4106 Lee Street, 1939
Builder: Randolph Dodd



4229 Meade Street, 1940
Builder: Unknown

Bull was first listed as an architect in the 1936 DC city directory. Bull had worked under Romulus Archer as a draftsman. He also worked at various jobs at the Bureau of Printing and was listed under several services in the DC area including that of architect. A number of houses he designed are found in Deanwood, as well.

LEWIS K. DOWNING (1896-1967)

Downing was born in Roanoke, VA and attained several professional degrees including a degree in civil engineering from Howard University in 1921, and a Master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Michigan in 1932. He joined the Howard faculty in 1924 as an instructor and ultimately served as a dean from 1936 until his retirement in 1964.



4239 Nash Street, 1951
Builder: Unknown

CLYDE MARTIN DRAYTON (1915-1983)



4319 Anacostia Avenue, 1949
Builder: Lester N. Porter

Drayton graduated from DC's Armstrong Technical High School in 1932 and went on to Howard University's School of Architecture and Engineering. He worked as a draftsman for Albert Cassell before establishing his own firm in 1942. He designed numerous commercial establishments in the District, including Blackie's House of Beef and Ed Murphy's Supper Club on Georgia Avenue NW.

LEWIS WENTWORTH GILES, SR. (1894-1974)



4232 Lane Place, 1939
Builder: Randolph Dodd



4245 Meade Street, 1932
Builder: Randolph Dodd

Giles moved with his family from Virginia to Washington, DC where he graduated from Armstrong Technical High School in 1908. After studying at the University of Illinois and serving in the U.S. Army, Giles returned to DC in 1918 and eventually became the chief architectural draftsman under Isaiah Truman Hatton for the Southern Aid Building. He opened his firm in 1921 but was not registered in the District to practice architecture until 1951, when licensure became a requirement. Listed on over a thousand building permits as the designer, Giles also designed office and apartment buildings, and churches, including the New Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Deanwood near his residence and office. Thirty-two of the homes he designed in Eastland Gardens are still standing.

JOHN BUNYON HOLLOWAY (1913-1993)



4004 Meade Street, 1948
Builder: Froe Properties



1205 40th Street, 1948
Builder: Froe Properties

Holloway attended Haines Normal and Industrial School in Augusta, GA and studied at Tuskegee Institute under Robert Robinson Taylor. He opened and operated Augusta's first African American-owned architectural firm in the 1930s. Moving to Washington, DC in 1937, he worked briefly as an architectural draftsman for Albert Cassell and Romulus Archer and later studied at the University of Illinois and at Washington's Catholic University. Holloway opened an office in Deanwood and became a DC registered architect in 1951.

HOWARD HAMILTON MACKEY, SR. (1901-1987)



4101 Meade Street, 1954
Builder: Unknown

Philadelphia-born Mackey obtained an architecture degree in 1924 from the University of Pennsylvania. He began teaching at Howard University's fledgling Department of Architecture in 1924 and in 1935, he became a licensed DC architect. Upon receiving his master's degree in architecture, also from Pennsylvania, Mackey assumed directorship of the Howard's School of Engineering and Architecture in 1938. He was singularly responsible for the school of Architecture becoming the first historically black college or university to be accredited by the National Architecture Accrediting Board to award five-year bachelor of architecture degrees. Mackey's design styles ranged from Colonial to Cape Cod to International and Art Deco. The remaining pre-1955 Mackey design in Eastland Gardens is shown above.

JAMES ALONZO PLATER (1908-1965)



4021 Meade Street, 1940
Builder: Randolph Dodd



4115 Lee Street, 1940
Builder: Randolph Dodd

Plater, a native of Deanwood, graduated from Armstrong Technical High School in 1927 and from Howard University's School of Architecture in 1932. Working first for Romulus Archer in 1932, he then worked as a draftsman and architectural detailer for Hilyard Robinson from 1934 to 1936, and as a designer for Howard Mackey, Sr., from 1936 to 1937. Though Plater resided in the Philadelphia area, he was registered to practice architecture in Washington, DC and New Jersey. He designed several buildings in Deanwood. In 1946, Plater and Mackey were proposed as architects for Howard's new architecture and engineering building.

ROSCOE INGERSOLL VAUGHN (1884-1971)



4228 Lane Place, 1938
Builder: Morrison Brothers



4256 Meade Street, 1947
Builder: Lawrence E. McKenzie

Vaughn, born in the District, graduated from Armstrong Technical High School in 1904, and studied at the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, and the University of Wisconsin. He also studied under William Wilson Cooke and Howard Dillworth Woodson. He began his own practice in Washington in 1918 and partnered intermittently with Woodson and George Ferguson from the 1920s to the 1950s. His style of houses included Colonial Revival. He also designed churches in the Washington area, most notably First Baptist Church of Deanwood (1921), in partnership with George Ferguson. His Eastland Gardens designs included two additional buildings developed in partnership with Ferguson and Woodson.

BUILDERS OF EASTLAND GARDENS

During the period of 1929 to 1955, most of the construction in the community was carried out by a few African American craftsmen. Not much is known about these men, but their contribution to Eastland Gardens is noteworthy.

By far, the most prolific was Randolph Dodd, who built a documented 51 houses during this period. Randolph, with his brother Jacob; were responsible for at least that many in Deanwood. The Dodds worked primarily with Lewis Giles but were builders for other architects including Alonzo Plater. H.M. Griffin and W.H. Lewis were the builders on record for at least four Eastland Gardens homes. R.A. Froe also constructed several homes in the community. Oliver Cassell, brother of architect Albert Cassell, worked as a builder/contractor for his brother, and for Clyde Drayton and Cyril Bow. Harry R. Entzminger built several Lewis Giles-designed homes.